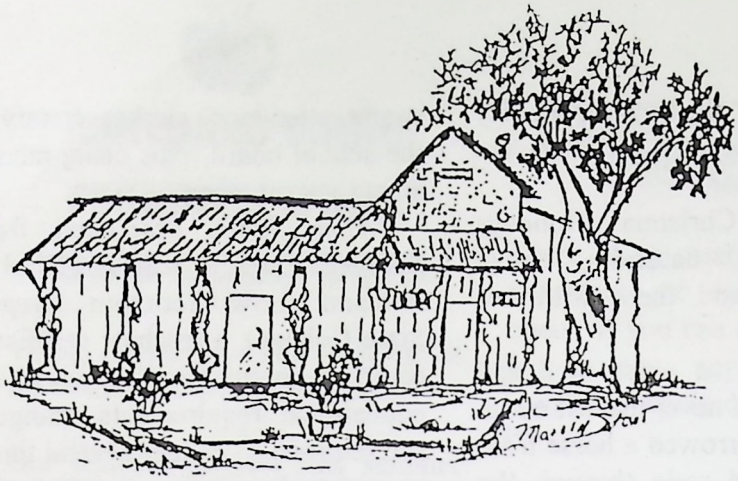

TRAILS, TALES AND TIMES

Upper Rogue Historical Society, Inc. (non-profit)
Trail Creek Tavern Museum
144 Old Hwy. 62
Trail, Oregon 97541 (next door to the Post Office)

NEWSLETTER OF UPPER ROGUE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

ANNIE BRIGGS FROM ONE-ROOM SCHOOLHOUSE TO THE COMPUTER AGE

by Carole Nielson

Things sure have changed since young Annie Wells started her teaching career in September, 1928 in a one-room schoolhouse in the remote settlement of Persist, located near the end of Elk Creek Road. Getting there in her Model T Ford was a major undertaking since she had to travel more than twenty-five miles over roads so muddy tire chains were needed. She was forced to leave her car at a lumber mill and hike several more miles to the Willits Ranch where she had arranged for room and board at $5 per week.

"My quarters were located in a loft above the woodshed. I called it 'Squirrel Inn,'" Ann reminisced.

"My pay was $85 a month, but I always shared $5 of it with the kids for helping me with chores. They didn't have any money and neither did their folks," she confided.

Twice a day Annie walked the one and a half miles on a wooded trail between the Willits Ranch, where she boarded, and the schoolhouse, sometimes in the dark.

"I taught eight children in six grades, " she related. "Every morning I chopped kindling, built a fire in the woodstove, swept out the school and carried a bucket of water from the nearby spring. Lots of times there were fresh cougar tracks at the spring."

One frosty fall morning Ann gathered an arm load of kindling, stuffed it into the woodstove, and turned away to find some matches.

"When I went back to light the fire, a snake stuck its head out of the stove and ran its tongue out at me. It was a harmless snake, but I don't like any kind of snakes. I waited until the biggest boy in school got there and asked him if he'd get rid of it for me. I stood on a desk while he got it between two sticks and carried it outside," Ann remembered.

"The kids and I put on a special program for Thanksgiving. Everyone came from miles around even though they had to walk."

Ann recalls that several mothers took turns bringing kettles of homemade soup and freshly-baked bread on cold days.

THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER USUALLY STIRS UP MEMORIES OF THOSE DAYS OF our youth when it was time to go "back to school". Back then it was a time of excitement—a fresh new atmosphere of learning.

(continued from page 1)

"We'd heat it up on the woodstove and have a delicious lunch in the cozy schoolhouse while it snowed or rained outside. On nice days we'd eat our lunches outside sitting on stumps or logs. A lot of the kids brought venison sandwiches made with either biscuits, cornbread, or homemade light bread. Most everyone had pear of apple trees and mothers always sent a slice of cake or cookies they had baked. We never had such things as bananas or oranges back then. Everyone packed their lunches in buckets. No one had paper sacks in those days and they would have been soaked by the time we walked to school anyway. Some kids used lard buckets and others brought their lunches in old cigar tins."

"Our only playground equipment was a teeter-totter two of the fathers had made by placing a sugar pine board across a big log," she continued. "Mostly the kids played drop-the-handkerchief, tag or red rover in good weather. During stormy weather, the boys would play marbles and the girls jacks on the schoolhouse floor."

When the Christmas Holidays rolled around, naturally, Annie wanted to spend them with her family.

"There was so much mud and snow I knew I'd never make it out in my car, so I borrowed a horse from the Willits and rode through the mountains to the Ulrich Ranch at Prospect. At the end of the ride, I tied the reins to the saddle horn like I'd been told to do, gave the horse a slap on the rump, and he trotted off down the trail toward home. I caught a ride down Crater Lake Highway to my folks' ranch which is now the Obstinate J Ranch."

The second school where Ann taught was located on the road to Oregon Caves. Ann remembered that indoor plumbing was installed while she taught there.

"One afternoon all of the younger children disappeared. After a brief search, I discovered them having a great time sailing paper boats in the toilets of the new restrooms."

"A construction crew was putting blacktop on the road for the first time," she recalled. "Except for the children of the construction workers, almost every child in the school was related."

"There were eight or ten very talented girls at that school. All of them, including myself, got ukuleles and entertained throughout the countryside. That was really enjoyable," she confessed with a twinkle in her blue eyes.

Annie became Mrs. Ray Briggs in 1933. During the 40's, Ann worked at the school in the small town of Shady Cove where she and Ray had built a home. She was a classroom teacher, principal, girls' athletic director, coach for all of the girls' sports, attendance clerk, secretary of the school board, plus being mom - all at the same time.

When Annie graduated from Southern Oregon Normal School in Ashland (now Southern Oregon State College), a teaching certificate could be obtained in two years. As educational requirements changed, she returned to college several times to update her skills. In 1964, she earned a Master's Degree from the University of Oregon and devoted the last ten years of her teaching career to working with the learning disabled.

At 86, this vivacious lady is still going strong, volunteering for a variety of community projects. Eleven years ago she helped organize a wildflower show in Shady Cove. Drawing on a lifetime of knowledge gathered while tramping through mountains, forests and meadows photographing and identifying wildflowers of Oregon, Annie provides pictures and narration for the excellent slide presentation at the annual Shady Cove Wildflower Show.

Annie' teaching career spanned nearly half a century, beginning in a one-room schoolhouse and extending into the computer age. When she retired in 1974, she had taught longer in the Eagle Point School District than any other person, and her record still stands. Ann has remained a life-long friend to many of her former students, some of whom are now great-grandparents.

Things sure have changed since Annie Briggs and others like her taught the three "R's" in the little one-room schools which were once scattered all over Oregon.

This article was published in ***Oregon Fish & Wildlife*** *- summer 1993 issue*

BOARD MEMBERS

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Secretary: Beverly Clark-878-2932
Treasurer: Pat Brooks-878-4810

Lee Cushman-878-4102
Judy Vaughan-878-4087
Alice Collier-878-2259

Curator: Bobbie Fry-878-2449

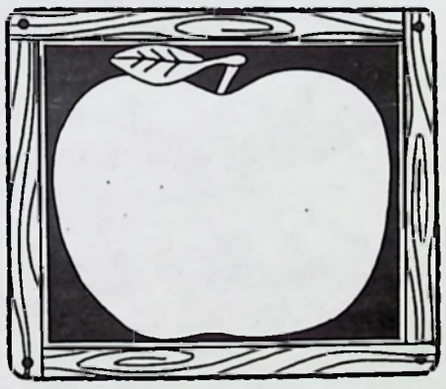
Meetings are held on the second Friday of each month at the Trail Tavern Museum at 2:00 p.m.
Please plan to attend.
Everyone is welcomed.

CHILDREN LEARN FOLKARTS WHILE DOING GOOD DEEDS

Young people have been meeting at the museum to work and learn.

Our featured project this summer was visiting and doing things for clients at Garrett House Foster Home. The young people made cookies and took them to the ladies. They were introduced to them.

Now they are working on tying lap robes to present to the clients. Anyone who is young-in-years or at heart is invited to join us on Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Some historic learning activities are centered around socks. Kids have washed socks on a wash-board, darned socks, and they learned the knitting process. Next, they will try spinning wool into yarn. Some have found that it isn't as simple as it looks, but it's fun!



OUT WITH THE OLD IN WITH THE NEW EXHIBITS

Some borrowed displays have been taken out and new ones put in the museum. Stop by and see the old cameras, axes and wedges, and old patterns.

YOUR HELP IS NEEDED

There is a real need for more volunteers to keep the museum open. If you can come and host for half a day, approximately three hours, we would certainly appreciate it.

Some days are very slow, like no one shows up. Other days have quite a few visitors who come to see things. They are invariably interested and interesting. We have enjoyed visiting with people who stop. Many of them add to our knowledge of the area.

You may get a call asking if you are interested in doing this. Please say, "Yes, I'd love to."

SPINNING YARNS: OLD-TIMERS GET TOGETHER & SHARE STORIES

One of our 'old-timers' has suggested that we have an "Old-Timers Get Together," just to visit and exchange stories. We have set the date and time for the event after the annual meeting on Sunday, September 27, from 1 to 3.

Please plan to come and tell or listen to stories about earlier times in our community. The museum will not vouch for the character or veracity of the story-tellers. But we love them. The conversations are sure to include "hunting" at some point.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

The URHS annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, September 26th at 2:30 p.m. at the Museum. This is both a business meeting beginning at 2:30 and a potluck dinner to start no later than 4:00 p.m. Business will include reports of the past year's activities by the Board members and the Curator. Entertainment will be old time fiddlers group.

The main item of business is the election of the Board members to direct the coming year's plans. All seven positions are open each year. At last three members from this year's Board will not be returning. We wish to thank Joan Smedes (10 years), Alice Collier (2 years) and Jim Collier (2 1/2 years) for their work and dedication for the time served.

Any paid member can be voted to a Board position. Come help run your organization. Help bring the history of Trail "alive" in fun and interesting ways.

GONE - BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

We are saddened by the loss of two of our Upper Rogue friends, Meryle Carlton and Joanne (Edler) Blaine, who lived in our area for a good many years. Our warmest regards go to their friends and families.

"A LIVING MUSEUM LOGGING DISPLAY UNDERWAY"

Work on the large outdoor logging displays is currently underway. The first item, a 1930's track mounted arch, is already at the edge of the Museum parking lot.

By next spring, a 1930's log loader will be added near the arch. The loader has solid rubber tires and is chain-driven to the rear wheels. As we get a display design completed, items will be given a permanent location.

Items we would like to locate and arrange for display include a 1930's tractor to go with the arch, a 30's frame log truck, and other logging items. We also need a small single saw lumber mill that could be made operable on special occasions. We need an individual or people who would be responsible for the saw-mill and willing to operate it. (A similar demonstration is at the High Desert Museum near Bend).

Any ideas for this logging history segment would be greatly appreciated. Come help while plans are being made. Other outdoor displays which show the history of the Upper Rogue would be welcomed. Mining and ranching are areas we'd like to interpret, as well. Is there any help out there? Are you a "miner" or a "rancher"? We'd like to hear from you.

EARLY UPPER ROGUE POSTAL SERVICE

Today we take postal service for granted, but not so in the early 1900's in the Upper Rogue.

The first mail in Trail was from Eagle Point to Trail and Persist. The mail "carrier" was George Adamson. He delivered the mail to each home to Trail every day, and to Persist three times a week - - by horse power.

There was no bridge across the river at Shady Cove in those days. George went up the Old Ferry Road and crossed the river on Blaess's Ferry, which operated on the current of the river rather than being powered by horses or mules.

Near the end of 1917, George bought a truck to use on the mail route. However, many times in the winter he had to resort to his horses to get up the road to Persist.

Meanwhile, the Postmaster at Persist did not want to lose his post office by not having enough mail volume. To solve that problem, he raised a big truck garden and sold to the people in the Valley - by mail!

George and his wife, Johannah, and their eight children (ranging in age from 15 months to 17 years) had settled into an abandoned homestead on Trail Creek. Just outside their fence on the river bank were Teepee rings left from a time when Indians camped there.

In the summer of 1924, the Adamsons moved to Arizona and Johannah died there. Soon after, the rest of the family returned to the Upper Rogue. Of the twelve children born, only seven reached adulthood. Many of th descendants have made their home in Eagle Point and the surrounding areas, including Florence Carnes and Gertrude Putnam.

Florence told of her school days in Trail. The one-room school was located where a church was later built. She and her siblings went to school with the Ragsdale children. (The above is from an Eagle Point Independent article by Anna Zander, November 9 - 15, 1977).

After being settled in 1890, Trail acquired its first Post Office on February 1, 1893, with the appointment of William G. Knighten as Postmaster. It was located in the Middlebusher Hotel. On November 13, 1903, Mary E. Middlebush was appointed Postmistress. In 1947, Irwin H. Howe constructed the Post Office building in use at the present time. He had been appointed Postmaster on April 5, 1935 and served to August 25, 1961. (Mail Tribune, Jan. 29, 1993).

The site for the new Trail Post Office - now under construction - is close to the present one.

Florence in front of truck used to carry mail.

97524-025

Spring 2001 Newsletter

Eagle Point Historical Society
P.O. Box 201
Eagle Point, OR 97524

Upper Rogue Historical Society, Inc. (non-profit)
Trail Creek Tavern Museum
144 Old Highway 62
Trail, OR 97541

Membership Categories
$5.00 per person yearly
$50.00 Life Membership
$250.00 Donor
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You can be a participant in preserving the unique history or our area. Active participation is optional but welcomed.

Upper rogue Historical Society, Inc. (non-profit)
Trail Creek Tavern Museum
144 Old Hwy 62
Trail, Oregon 97541

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Please circle the membership category at the left and mail this form with your check to:

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